



## **Peach Metals Industries**

### **December 16, 2003**

#### **Introduction**

The Georgia Division of Public Health (GDPH) was asked by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) to prepare a health consultation for Peach Metals Industries (PMI). In January 2002, ATSDR received a petition from a community group to conduct a health consultation at PMI. The purpose of the public health assessment is to determine the potential for adverse health effects from exposure to on-site and off-site environmental contamination generated by past practices of PMI, and to determine the need for additional public health actions.

#### **Site Description and History**

PMI is located approximately 1-mile northwest of downtown Byron, Georgia at the intersection of Boy Scout Road and Juniper Creek Road. The abandoned property contains approximately 9.5 acres of land, six buildings in poor condition, and two tower structures that dominate the site. The majority of the site is paved, or covered with sparse vegetation and overgrown shrubs. The site is currently being used to store old restaurant equipment. A chain-link fence surrounds the site. A locked gate on Boy Scout Road restricts access to the property.

Private wells provide water to a few residents located within a mile of PMI. The residence directly south of the PMI site is connected to the Byron water supply. Census 2000 data indicate that 507 residents live within a one-mile radius of the site. Over the past decade, the development of new homes and manufactured housing has grown along Juniper Creek Road across from the site. These homes are supplied with municipal water from Byron, Georgia.

PMI is a former electroplating facility that operated from 1971 until 1987, when PMI filed bankruptcy, and the property was abandoned. Before PMI, the U.S. Air Force used the property as a barracks and radar tracking station for a nearby Nike missile installation until 1967. In 1967, the property was purchased by the McCord Family Irrevocable Trust and subsequently leased to PMI. After PMI filed for bankruptcy, Concrete Sales and Services, Inc. used the site from 1987 to 1991.

While PMI was in operation, improper management of electroplating wastewater and process materials led to soil contamination at the site, which eventually led to groundwater contamination. The EPA ordered a removal action that cleared the site of abandoned waste, stored process materials, and contaminated soil during several phases between 1991 and 1995.

On February 20, 2002, the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (GEPD) responded to complaints about the site's accessibility and safety. Residents were concerned that children could get onto the site and play in the soil and water collected in the surface impoundments. There were reports of children playing on the property and evidence, as noted by GEPD during a site visit, that children or teenagers were accessing the property for recreational activities.

#### **Environmental Sampling**

In 1991, GEPD ordered Concrete Sales & Services and the McCord Irrevocable Trust to sample groundwater at the site. The initial groundwater samples were taken from four monitoring wells installed in the vicinity of the surface impoundments. On June 29, 1994 the site was listed on Georgia's Hazardous Site Inventory. In late 1995, GEPD's Geologic Survey Program installed and sampled 12 additional monitoring wells at the site. In 1997, GEPD's Hazardous Site Response Program (HSRP) installed an additional 10 monitoring wells. Sampling results from 25 monitoring wells determined that heavy metals and a chlorinated solvent in excess of safe drinking water standards had contaminated on-site groundwater.

#### **Results**

While measured levels of soil and groundwater contamination on the PMI property were present in the past, and some contaminated on-site groundwater remains, the information regarding groundwater flow and the data from off-site private water wells show no current exposure pathway for elevated levels of contaminants from the site. The majority of residents living near PMI



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are connected to the Byron municipal water supply. It is unlikely that the health concerns described by residents are associated with PMI because individuals in the community (except those who worked at PMI) did not likely spend enough time on the property to have significant contact with contaminants. For PMI workers, the hazards from contaminants are not known and the level of exposure to contaminations remains undetermined because the limited amount of information available about conditions during plant operations. The community group did not note any health concerns among former workers.

The surface impoundments were backfilled with clean dirt in April 2002, therefore; this hazard was eliminated. Rainwater in the surface impoundments was not sampled; therefore, information about potential contaminants in on-site surface water before the cleanup is not known. However, based on EPA soil clean up levels reached at PMI, infrequent exposure to levels of cadmium and chromium present in the soil or surface water runoff contained in the surface impoundments prior to being backfilled is not expected to cause any adverse health effects. Although children had access to the site in the past, the site is now fenced and the entrance gate is locked to prevent unauthorized entry

onto the site. Unless a child's contact with rainwater occurred almost daily with actual ingestion of contaminated water, and the contact occurred over several years, the level of exposure to any contamination is not likely to be a health concern.

#### **Conclusions**

The PMI site currently poses ***no apparent public health hazard***. No current or future completed exposure pathways exist with known contaminants in groundwater, soil or surface water. For PMI workers and others who had exposures on-site in the past, the health hazard is unknown because insufficient data are available to evaluate past exposures.

#### **Recommendations**

- GEPD should continue to monitor groundwater contamination at PMI to prevent future exposure.
- The drinking water well located on-site should be properly abandoned and capped by the owner of the property.
- The property owner should ensure the continued security of the fence and the placement and upkeep of "No Trespassing" signs posted along the perimeter fence of the property.